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DATE: 22 Mar 1971

STATINTL

TO:

FROM:

SUBJECT:

NSC Request for Memo on Turkey

REMARKS:

Sam Hoskinson called me last week asking for a brief rundown on how the new Turkish government may approach the opium problem. The attached memo was prepared by OCI, and I am sending it to Sam.

*Pls file WH Misc.*

*Distribution:  
orig & 1 - Sam Hoskinson/NSC  
3/22/71 1 - O/OCI attn [redacted]*

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22 March 1971

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Probable Attitude of Nihat Erim Toward Opium Control

1. Any action that Premier-designate Nihat Erim sponsors in the matter of tightening Turkey's restrictions on the production and sale of opium will depend on three factors: (a) the degree to which his government concerns itself with this problem; (b) the attitude of the Turkish military leadership; and (c) his personal feelings.
2. Erim has been designated interim premier at a time of political upheaval. His choice derives from a combination of attributes that recommend him to the military leaders: coolness, stability, experience, and lack of any driving personal ambition. His job is to regain control of the situation by suppressing political radicals and to restore normalcy to Turkey. He will have the backing of the military in this, and can be expected to draw upon their resources to the full extent needed.
3. His main preoccupation will, therefore, be with matters of public order. The opium licensing bill now awaiting parliamentary consideration and the organizational changes in the collection and enforcement agencies will have far lower priorities. Nevertheless, these matters have already achieved a degree of momentum. If the more violent dissidents can be brought under control, and if reasonable calm can be returned to college campuses, there is nothing to prevent the Demirel-inaugurated opium control program from moving forward, or even accelerating during the next few months.
4. The opium control legislation never became a major political football, as was feared by many. In its present mood, and conscious of being under the watchful eye of the military, Parliament may now move ahead on the opium bill, along with other legislation,

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with far less debate in the pre-voting phase than was usually the case under Demirel. Stricter enforcement of laws on the sale and distribution of opium, already planned, will probably be carried out in 1971. If he is able to do so, Erim may wish to review the present plan of attack. Any decision of his to change the existing organization or program would be likely to increase the effectiveness of the campaign.

5. The military, who will set priorities in Turkey for the foreseeable future, are the final arbiters. This applies whether they rule directly or through a parliamentary government. They are essentially uninformed on the international opium problem, as it affects Turkey, and have taken no stand. President Sunay's influence with the present top leaders remains strong, and he has recently been made aware of the dimensions of the problem by Director Ingersoll. The way is thus open to convincing the military decision-makers of the immediacy of the danger. Those who do this should encounter no particular preconceptions or resistance, but the generals will probably be more receptive if they expect some tangible return to Turkey for their cooperation.

6. Little is known of Erim's personal attitude toward the international drug trade or Turkey's role in it, but several factors are encouraging. As a widely recognized expert on international law, he can be expected to favor Turkey's living up to its commitments under the 1961 UN convention on the international movement of narcotics. In this regard, he would be more sensitive to criticism from abroad than most other Turkish leaders.

His political base is secure; he does not appear to have any further political ambitions; and he would probably be far less deterred from acting than was Demirel by press charges of subservience to US interests.

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